

Recollections of Dorothy Davis

(Note: the text below was written by my grandmother, Dorothy Davis, shortly before she died. A considerable amount of Gray/Erwin family history and recollections are presented)

At the request of some of my grandchildren, I have at last decided to put down some memories of my early life. These will not be in any chronological order, but merely as they are recalled to mind. I ask your pardon if I ramble a little, but please bear with me and share some of the diverse personalities of my parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. Many different backgrounds have merged to make me what I am today - a bundle of shivering, quivering nerves, fears and hopes (a little humor there - very little).

Like a kaleidoscope, my very earliest memories come to mind in bits and pieces. I remember several things when I was 3 or 4 years old. I had a little white iron bed that stood at the foot of my parent's bed. Every night, without fail, I would have the same dream that I was flying all around the room. After a while I would begin to get frightened and cry, so then I could get into bed between Mama and Dad and stay till morning. I don't know how long this went on, but I was then relegated to a corner in my sister's bedroom. I have always believed that my habit of wetting the bed was responsible for this move. After this move, which was when we lived in Mrs. Foltz's big house across the street from where the existing house was built when I was six years old. I remember one Christmas Eve when my sisters, Helen and Joy, whispered to me that if I was very quiet I would hear Santa Claus and his reindeer come up on the porch roof which was just outside the window. I swore I heard the patter of little hooves and a hearty "Hoho" during the night, which was definitely proven the next morning when little foot prints were discovered in the snow on the roof top. For some reason, it must have been the custom in those days, when we went to bed on Christmas Eve after hanging up our stocking, there was no evidence that Christmas was near. When we got up the next morning, there was the decorated Christmas tree and the gifts. I always got a doll with homemade clothes, some little tin dishes and books. One year I got a doll buggy and another time a little red sled. Our long black stockings always held an orange and some nuts and candy. On the Sunday nearest Christmas we went to church and spoke our "piece". All the children were then given a sack of candy and the inevitable orange. As Christmas was the only time we got oranges, they were quite a treat. To this day, the smell of an orange brings to mind those early Christmas days. For dinner we always had baked chicken, or sometimes a duck or goose, with dressing. And always, always cranberries. Of course the tree was trimmed with cranberries strung on strings, as well as popcorn. I never cared for the cranberry sauce, but was fascinated by the berries popping as they cooked. We usually had mince meat pies, which were also not a favorite of mine, and pumpkin pies. And of course home made bread. We didn't have bought bread for many years, and then only on special occasions. Our butter was made by a lady who had a cow down the street and it was made in a wooden mold like a little round bowl, and had a design on top of acorns. It was bright yellow and as I recall cost 35¢ per pound. My father would not eat creamery butter from the grocery store as he had heard from someone who had gone through a creamery that it was dirty. My father was exceptionally clean and germ conscious. We had to wash our hands at the slightest provocation and had our own individual

towels and not allowed to use anyone else's. He had had to have a skin cancer removed from his face and was afraid this could be passed on to someone else if the same towel was used. When I was very small, there was an old black couple, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who lived in Fowler and had a little grocery store in their house. I would go there with my father to buy some little thing, in a can or box of course, and Mr. Smith would always give me a stick of horehound candy. I always had my orders in advance, and I didn't dare eat it until we had taken it home and washed it off. Mr. and Mrs. Smith, his name was Bill and hers was Sophie, had been slaves and had a lot of stories to tell about those days. Sophie's brother Alec Scott, lived across the street from them, and he had also been a slave, and was in the Civil War as a young boy. He and his wife had three black girls, three white girls and one son who was spotted black and white. The story was that when they were slaves she had been made to submit to the white master. I never saw her as she died before I was big enough to remember, but I do remember the girls, black and white. The white girls had yellow hair and were rather odd acting, but the black ones were really very smart. One of them, who went to school with Helen, got a job in Washington, DC working in the U.S. Mint. Her name was Grace. I don't believe any of them ever married. When old Alec Scott was living, all of the young boys in town used to go to his house on evenings and he would tell them stories of when he was a slave and of the Civil War. He lived to be very old, and I remember him as very black with a lot of snow white hair.

Another of my early memories was when I was three years old and Helen and Joy each had a big china doll. I was not allowed to touch them, much less play with them, but one day I got Joy's doll and took it out on the front porch where I promptly dropped it and smashed it beyond repair. I was punished severely and was never allowed to forget what I had done. About that same time, we were living in a little house downtown. I got my mother's wedding ring, took it out in the yard and lost it. I was in disgrace for that also for years. About 20 years later, when my parents had the printing shop in Fowler, a man who was then living in that house was plowing his garden and turned up a gold wedding ring. He brought it to the printing shop and it turned out to be my mother's ring.

About that same time, when we were still living in that little house, was the only time I can ever recall seeing my father's mother, Grandma Gray. She had come to visit us and we were out in the yard, and I remember her long black dress touching the ground. I don't remember her face, but thought as I looked up at her that she was very tall. However, I have been told that she was a very small woman, barely five feet tall and weighing about a hundred pounds. I suppose she looked tall to me at that time. She died when I was four years old. I remember my father coming home from work one afternoon with tears running down his face, and telling my mother that they had found his mother dead that morning. She lived in Coatsburg and since we did not have a telephone, one of his brothers had sent him the message at the railway depot where he worked as a telegraph operator. I remember being at the funeral in Coatsburg and of being lifted up to look at her. My grandfather Gray died when I was four months old and I have been told that when he died, Grandma put on "widow's weeds" and dressed that way the rest of her life, four years later. Widow's weeds consisted of black dresses, shoes, and stockings, no other color, and when they went out of the house a little bonnet with a long black veil almost to the knees. She went every day to the cemetery to visit Grandpa's grave.

My great grandfather, Richard Gray, was born in England in 1815, and came to America in 1829 with his father, Isaac Gray. They landed in New York City and made their way to Illinois by wagon and ox teams to what is now Coatsburg. Why they chose this particular place I don't know, except that it was fertile land. In addition to farming, Isaac (my great-great grandfather) covered a large territory as a

veterinarian - the first one in that part of the country. In December 1855, he had some horses stolen by Indians. He followed them to the Mississippi River at Quincy, but lost their tracks there and was returning home when he froze his feet and fell from his horse in a winter storm, dying shortly after reaching home. As there was no cemetery in Coatsburg at that time, his son Richard donated a part of his farm for that purpose. Isaac was the first person to be buried in what has been known as the Gray cemetery.

Richard (my great grandfather) married Sarah Hart, and they were the parents of my grandfather, Albert Hart Gray, who was born in 1843. He married Sarah Elizabeth Leach in 1866. To them, in a log cabin, were born two girls and four boys. The two girls were the oldest, and both died very young from TB. Their names were Minnie and Lula. The boys, in order of birth, were Harvey, Wallace, Lawrence, and Orville. Lawrence was my father, born in 1878. Uncle Orville, affectionately known as Ike, since his name was really Isaac Orville, was my drinking uncle. He was four years younger than my father, and the story is told that when he was only a few weeks old, my grandmother had to cook a huge meal for all the men who came to help thresh the wheat. My father, at four years old, was bribed to watch the baby, by giving him the sugar bowl and telling him he could eat all the sugar he wanted.

These six children were raised in the log cabin. It had a dirt floor, which they said Grandma kept swept just as clean as a wooden one. There was a big fireplace where the cooking was done. In one corner was a spinning wheel, and my father used to tell how Grandma would spin and the two older girls would knit all the socks, sweaters, and mittens for the family. He said one of his earliest memories was hearing, of an evening, the whirr of the spinning wheel and the click click of the knitting needles. He and his brothers would lie on the floor in front of the fireplace and read and sometimes pop corn and crack nuts to eat. The only light they had came from the fireplace and candles, which were also home made.

Grandma and the girls also pieced quilts and quilted them. They at home killed meat and wild game and of course what vegetables they grew. They always had jellies and jams and home canned fruits for pies. The mainstay in those days was corn bread made from the corn they grew and ground themselves. My father said that once in a while, if they had some white flour, Grandma would bake bread, but it was treated as a dessert. Grandma was of Pennsylvania Dutch descent, and it was their custom to have seven different kinds of condiments at each meal, such as pickles, jellies, horseradish, etc. Helen said she could remember this. This ancestry no doubt explained Grandma's cleanliness to the point of being finicky.

My Grandfather Gray, I have been told, was a very sweet man and dearly loved his children and grand children. My mother thought so much of him and used to tell the story of shortly after she and my father were married and were living in Peoria, Illinois, he came on the train to see them. He came into the yard holding something behind him, and his eyes were twinkling. It was his wedding present to them and was a blue and white water pitcher. He paid fifty cents for it and today it is worth more than three hundred dollars. I have the pitcher and hope it will always stay in the family. I have some pictures of Grandpa, and he had a long white beard reaching almost to his waist. He was always called "Father" by his children. From the stories I have heard of him, he was a good kind man.

Now, about Grandmother Gray. I guess she was a sharp tongued, peppery little person, very rigid and strict. My mother, who never said a word against anyone, said once that she had a sharp tongue, and I think stood in awe of her. There were three daughters-in-law, Aunt Jose, my mother, and Aunt Essie. I guess she criticized and gave explicit orders and/or advice to Mama and Aunt Essie on everything from cooking, to housekeeping to child raising. Both of them, being of a mild disposition, bowed to her

indomitable will. Aunt Jose, however, stood her ground, and brooked no interference from her or anyone else, so Grandma soon learned to leave her alone.

Aunt Jose was my Uncle Wallace Gray's wife. The had one daughter, my cousin Lucille. For some reason, I never knew why as this was talked about in whispers, Uncle Wallace and Aunt Jose were not married until Lucille was four years old. Lucille was really a beautiful girl and had deep dimples in both cheeks. She was the apple of their eye and had almost anything she wanted, including five husbands, who she married and discarded at will. Uncle Wallace was a big jolly man, of much larger stature than his brothers, who were of slight build. All four of the Gray boys were telegraph operators for the CB&Q Railroad. I always thought Uncle Wallace had the best job, because he worked in the big depot in Quincy. Whenever we went to Quincy, on the train of course, we always stopped by to see Uncle Wallace at work. He would see us, take off his green eyeshade and come out from behind the counter and take me, as a child up to the candy counter. He would always ask me what I wanted and they had big red apples polished to a shine. I always chose an apple (which turned out to be soft and unpalatable) but then he would go ahead and get me a big sack of candy and always a balloon on a stick, which broke before I got it home. In fact, after I grew up and married and Shirley was small, Uncle Wallace would come to Fowler on the train and spend the day and he always brought big sacks of candy to Shirley, Jack and Joe. He was always laughing and making jokes about everything. He and Aunt Jose lived together for many years, happily I though, but then Aunt Jose fell in love with the ice man, divorced Uncle Wallace and married Floyd, who was twenty years younger than she. He adored her and she lived to be in her 90s. Up until the time she died, I never saw her that she didn't look like a fashion plate with rouge and lipstick and her hair just so. Uncle Wallace never remarried, although he did have a lady friend. Harvey Gray, eldest of the boys, married Ida Spoonmore and she died in child birth with their only child. The baby died too. Her family blamed Uncle Harvey for her untimely death and he grieved for years. He never remarried and was kind of a benevolent figure to his brothers' children. He had a large handlebar mustache of which he was very vain. He would come to our house to spend the day and always drank hot tea. He, too, was extremely particular and after each sip of tea or bite of food he would wipe his mustache with a large white handkerchief. He seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of those snow white handkerchiefs in his pockets. He always brought me something and several times I remember getting sick and throwing up the candy of which I had overeaten. Uncle Harvey was very fastidious about his dress. He always wore a white shirt and black tie, and he and his brothers wore "sleeve protectors" at work to keep their shirt sleeves from getting soiled. Sleeve protectors were usually made of black sateen and reached from wrists to elbow, with elastic at each end to keep them in place. I used to think all men dressed that way, and was shocked when I saw other men in dirty shirts and pants or overalls. They all wore black polished dress shoes that laced up over their ankles and carried a gold pocket watch to which was attached a long chain. These were railroad watches and every time a train went by, the watches were pulled out, the cover snapped open and the time checked to the second, to see if Number 11 or Number 8 was on time. Uncle Harvey, being alone with no family to provide for, had more money than the others. He invested his money in stocks and bonds and at his death had accumulated quite a sizeable amount of money. This was divided between his brothers. He took a trip every year to different parts of the United States. I remember one years when I was small, he sent me a post card from the Southwest. The card had a picture on the front of an Indian papoose, and he wrote that he was going to bring me one just like it to play with. I took it very seriously, and when he returned without the papoose, I was bitterly disappointed and never quite trusted Uncle Harvey after that. But he

still brought me candy.

As I said earlier, Uncle Orville (Ike) was my drinkin' uncle. He was the youngest of the family and had an irrepressible sense of humor in his younger days. He delighted in shocking the staid and sedate members of the family. One prime example was when his mother (my Grandmother Gray) died. After the funeral the family assembled at the house for a big meal, as was the custom, and during the evening Uncle Orville slipped out and put on one of Grandma's black dresses and her black shawl over his head. He was a small man and as he came out into the room where all the people were, dimly lit with kerosene lamps, people screamed and fainted. He thought this was hilarious, an opinion not shared by anyone else. He was a grown man at that time and his daughter Frances, was old enough to remember this escapade and tell about it in later years. I remember one time, before I was even in school, my mother and I went on the train to visit Uncle Orville and Aunt Essie for the day. As Coatsburg was only six miles away from Fowler, we did this frequently. I always looked forward to these visits, as my cousin Frances had a big doll named Alice. I was allowed to play with Alice. She had long hair, and Aunt Essie had made her a lot of clothes. One in particular I remember was a bride's dress and a piece of white lace curtain was her veil. Alice had shoes and stockings, underclothing, little coats and hats, and ribbons for her hair. Uncle Orville had made her a little trunk which her clothes were kept in. I was in seventh heaven playing with her, and was very very careful after my fiasco with Joy's doll. Incidentally, I now have the little doll trunk filled with clothing, but apparently Alice has gone to doll heaven. One of the visits, while Aunt Essie was getting dinner, always very lavish in our honor, she sent Uncle Orville to the grocery store for something and he came back with a cake. It was a luscious looking chocolate cake and was covered with a thick white frosting over which was sprinkled little dark chocolate pellets. While we were eating the cake, Uncle Orville told us that the chocolate decorations on top were mouse turds, his very words. I can remember the shocked looks on my mother's and Aunt Essie's faces, as they were both so prim and proper, and how he laughed uproariously. My mother blushed and Aunt Essie said, "Oh, Orville." It seemed no matter how outrageous he was, all the family was very indulgent with him. He was "Peck's Bad Boy" incorrigible. They used to tell about when he was just a little fellow and had a cat. Now, his father had a sister named Maria, pronounced Ma-Ri-a. The cat was meowing and Uncle Orville thought it was saying Ma-Ri-a, so he was pulling the cat's tail and otherwise abusing it, and saying , "Say Aunt Ma-Ri-a"

Uncle Orville I guess, was a gay young blade. However, he was brought up short when it was found that a young girl, 16 I think, was going to have a baby. That young girl was Esther Wheeler, called Essie, and her father, a dour Scotsman, came after Uncle Orville with a shotgun. Uncle Orville demurred, and the law was called in. After a brief incarceration, he was "persuaded" to marry Essie, and a few months later Frances was born. A year later they had another little girl named Inez, but she only lived for a few days. They had no more children. Frances was close in age to my two sisters, so they were together a lot and Frances spent a lot of time at our house. She and Joy as teenagers never wanted me tagging along with them. They would dress up in their best clothes in the afternoon and walk down to the post office for the mail, hoping that the boys would look at them. I guess I detracted from their glamour as the bratty little sister, and besides they knew I tattled on them to my mother. Sometimes Mama made them take me along and they hated that.

Uncle Orville didn't settle down for a good many years after they married. He, my Uncle Harvey and my father, all worked as telegraph operators at the little depot in Eubanks, which was four miles west of Fowler. Each one worked eight hours a day, seven days a week. Many times Uncle Orville would go on

a drinking spree and couldn't go to work, so Uncle Harvey and my father would double up and work his shift and the railroad never knew it. I remember Uncle Orville being gloriously intoxicated and coming to our house. Mama and Aunt Essie cried, my father grumbled and scolded and I was frightened to death. Poor Aunt Essie. She was certainly not endowed with any physical beauty and was a quiet, retiring little person, but she had a heart of gold and was patient and long suffering. She never seemed to ask for, or really expect, anything out of life. When Uncle Orville died suddenly of a heart attack at age 76, she said to me, "Oh, I loved him so much."

He loved to work with wood as a hobby and made a cedar chest for Frances and another one for Uncle Harvey, which I inherited and still have.

My father, Lawrence Gray, was to me an enigma. He was not jolly like Wallace or a clown like Orville, nor yet a loner like Harvey. He had a deep love for his family, but was wary of expressing it. I can never remember my father kissing or hugging me. He expected, as his due, and received instant obedience. Yet there were times when I saw flashes of humor, especially in his later years. He was generous with his possessions, and helped a lot of people monetarily, but seldom spoke of it. I believe he was the only one of his family who had any religious leanings. He was hard working, and when we moved to Fowler, he worked at the little Eubanks depot four miles from home. Not having a car in those early days, or even a horse and buggy, he had to walk those four miles twice each day, in all kinds of weather, rain, snow, bitter cold, and blistering heat. When I was five or six years old, he bought a four wheeled bicycle that fit on the railroad tracks and that made the trip a little easier and faster. Many times my mother would take me on the train to Eubanks and we would spend the day, eating lunch with my father. Then during the slack times when no trains were due for a while, he would take me for a ride on the strange bicycle, up and down the track. That was a big treat for a young child. In 1928 he bought his first car, a brand new Chevrolet and drove that to work. I was 13 years old at time and learned to drive on the gravel road between Fowler and Eubanks. I think the main reason he bought the car at that time was that Joy was in the Sanitarium in Quincy threatened with TB, and we drove to see her every Sunday afternoon. I had to sit in the car while they visited her as no one was permitted in under age 16. She was in there for a year, and as my father had two sisters and a 16 years old niece who died of TB, he was afraid Joy was going to die and really went overboard with worry at that time. Joy had never been "well". As a small child she had typhoid fever which left her susceptible to the infections. She was always ailing with her ears, chest, etc., and was taken from doctor to doctor trying to help her. When she was in the 9th grade (Fowler school at that time had 9 grades) she was hit in the head by a baseball at school and was unconscious for several days. I was in the first grade at that time and remember the doctor coming to the school. Fowler had a doctor at that time. His name was Dr. Haxel. He came in his horse and buggy and carried her out in his arms. He took her to our house and she was put to bed. Dr. Haxel stayed day and night by her bed for several days until she regained consciousness. He said her head needed to be packed in ice. In those days of no refrigerators, ice was almost unheard of in the summertime. However, there was a man out in the country who had an ice house. In the winter time he cut huge cakes of ice from his pond, wrapped it in heavy gunny sacks and spread straw over it and it kept for a long time. He let us have some ice for Joy's head. Dad went to the store and bought a case of strawberry pop for Joy. I was not allowed to have any of it since I had not been hit in the head with a baseball, and was very envious of her. The only time I ever saw Dad upset with Joy was when she ran away and married Charlie Farrell. This came as an unpleasant surprise to almost everyone. Charlie's wife had died shortly after the birth of their eighth child. He was 20 years older than Joy and had children her age. That was a bad time at our house. But

eventually she was forgiven and brought back into the fold. Helen and I always felt that she was the favorite daughter.

Helen was 11 years older than I and three years older than Joy. She was always more of a mother figure to me than a sister. She was married to Sam Hughes when she was 18 and moved to Quincy. I was seven at that time and used to like to go to their house for several days. When I was nine, my nephew Joe was born. This was a big surprise to me as I knew absolutely nothing of reproduction. I adored Joe from the day he was born and was allowed to hold and rock him, but couldn't carry him around. Two years later when I was eleven, Jack was born, so I had two little boys to play with. I pushed them endlessly in their baby buggy, up and down in front of their house. When the boys were six and four, Sam went off his rocker and had to be put into a State Hospital. This left Helen destitute so she came home and brought the boys, but after a while decided to go to Elgin, Illinois, where Sam was in the Hospital and go into Nurses Training. For a while she could visit him, but he finally got so bad that she was not allowed to see him. The boys stayed with us in Fowler. Helen finished her training and eventually got a divorce from Sam and married Larry Johnsen. They then took the boys who were teenagers to live with them. Joy never had any children, so the only grandchildren my parents had were Joe, Jack, and Shirley. As a summation of the Gray family, they were traced back through England to William the Conqueror. The name was originally DeCroy, later De Grey, and finally just Grey. Some branches of the family after coming to America changed the spelling to Gray. One of our illustrious ancestors was Lady Jane Grey, who was Queen of England for a short time and later beheaded. In our family was also Zane Grey, author, and Harold Gray, cartoonist of the comic strip, Little Orphan Annie.

My mother's family, the Erwins, came from Scotland and Ireland and Wales. Her father was Cornelius Matthew (Matt) Erwin, born in 1860. His great grandfather, David Erwin, born in 1758, fought in the Revolutionary War, and was in the boat with George Washington when they crossed the Delaware. This Picture was always prominently displayed in the Erwin homes, and it was commonly believed that the man kneeling directly behind Washington was our ancestor. This is confirmed in certain military records on file in Washington, DC.

My grandmother, Sarah Isabelle (Belle) Taylor was of Irish descent. She was born in 1862. Nothing much is known of her father's people, except that they laid claim to a castle in Ireland and fought over it for many years. Her mother's maiden name was Nichols and they were prosperous and well to do farmers in and around Ursa, Illinois. I have always found it interesting that my great, great grandmother's name on Grandma Erwin's side of the family was "Mourning" Bowles. Why was she named Mourning?

My grandfather Erwin was apparently a good, kind, unassuming man, according to his children. I can only remember seeing him two times. Once he came to our house when I was little and later we went to visit him. He was killed in a car accident on Christmas Even when I was 13 years old. I regretted not knowing him. When my mother was growing up, Grandpa Erwin was a very prosperous man. He started the first telephone company in Macomb, Illinois and surrounding area. He built a large two story house in Bowen. My mother, being the only girl in the family, had her own room, a piano and nice clothes. She finished high school and went to business college, something almost unheard of in the early 1900s. They had satin covered sofas and chairs and long lace curtains and velvet drapes, and my grandmother lived life to the hilt at that time. Grandpa later had business reverses and lost all his money. He was a dreamer, a trait he passed on to all his sons. The grass was always greener across the fence and there was the proverbial pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. He was a well educated man, but very impractical.

He married Belle Taylor in 1881. The circumstances of their marriage would have made a good novel. As a young girl, Grandma Erwin lived with her mother and step-father on a farm near Camp Point, Illinois. Her father, Robert Taylor, had been captured by Indians and never seen again. That story will be told in more detail later. Anyway, her mother subsequently married a man named Henry Crawford. From what my grandmother told me, he was not a kind man and she and her mother lived a very unhappy life with him. Grandma was in love with a young man who lived on a neighboring farm and they planned to marry. The step father would not allow it as he thought the young man didn't have enough money, and in some way he heard of Matt Erwin, who was of a well to do family and as was the custom at times in these early days, a marriage was arranged between him and my young grandmother. She was a very lovely looking girl and he was attracted to her and very proud of her, giving her anything she wanted, but she never loved him. They had eight children, and when the youngest boy was grown, she divorced Grandpa and went to California. She had inherited a lot of money from an aunt, which was a big factor in this decision. Grandpa was left a saddened and lonely man and my mother used to cry about him many times.

Of the family of eight children, my mother, Alma Susan was the eldest. Most people called her Alma, but her brothers always called her Sue. The next child was Charles. He married Grace McCutcheon and they moved to Wyoming. They had five children, Agnes, Marie, Mac, Kathryn, and Margaret. I only saw those cousins once, when I was about ten years old, and Uncle Charlie maybe twice. Then the next child was a girl named Lela Floy. She only lived to be a year old. The next was a boy Ray, and at age 14, he was burned to death in a gasoline explosion. My mother never got over it. Uncle Forrest was the next. He married Katherine (Katie) Ingram and they had one son Kenneth. After Forrest came Clinton. He married Frances (Fan) Stevens. They had no children. George (Jimmy) Erwin was next. He married Mary Parks and they had two children, Nancy and Jim. Uncle Lewis was the youngest. He married Katherine Fuhr and they had one son originally named Lewis D. Erwin Jr. Then his name was changed to Jacque one time when Aunt Katherine got mad at Uncle Lewis and said no son of hers would ever bear that name. After she died, his name was changed back to Lewis D. Erwin, Jr. and he is now known as Lew. Needless to say, Katherine was not looked upon with favor by any members of the family. I didn't know my older uncles very well, but was close to Jimmy and Lewis. They spent a lot of time at our house before they were married. They, along with Uncle Clinton, were in World War I. Uncle Clinton was in the Air Force and saw action in France. I remember him bringing home some pictures of French girls and Aunt Fan being jealous. Jimmy was in the Navy and Lewis was in the Army. He was also in World War II and retired with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery in accordance with his request.

My Uncle George, or Jimmy as we called him for no particular reason, was my favorite uncle probably because he stayed with us all summer every year before he was married. These were his summer vacations from college. He was a graduate from Carthage College, majoring in journalism. All of his life he pursued elusive dreams, his biggest one of being the author of the great American novel. He worked on this for many years, and I don't know what ever became of it. He was for a time a reporter for the Peoria Star, a big daily newspaper in Peoria, Illinois. He still thought he could make millions by publishing his own newspaper, and drug his family from the east coast to the west, starting a small newspaper for a while, and then discarding it for another just over the horizon. He eventually ended up in Peoria again and was a reporter until he retired. He had no inclination to do any physical work and used to loll around all day in the summer. My father thought he at least ought to earn his bread, so one

day gave him orders to dig all the potatoes in our huge garden. Jimmy dutifully went out with his spade, but finally gave up. When my father came home from work that afternoon and asked him if he had dug all the potatoes, Jimmy said, "You know it's a funny thing. I dug under all those vines and there was not a single potato." My dad went out to the garden and Jimmy had dug up all the tomato plants. We never let him forget that. He was always good natured and didn't take offense at any remarks made at his expense. I remember one time when I was in grade school that he was staying at our house and was teasing me about something. It took as much as I could and then said, "Stop it you bastard." I had no idea what bastard meant, but had heard it at school, I guess. Anyway, he laughed loud and long at that. My mother was horrified and I was lectured and punished for that. I often scandalized my poor mother, something I was told rather often that my two older sisters never did. Needless to say, these little escapades were never done in the presence of my father as I was smart enough to realize the consequences. I believe my father did not approve of my open affection for my Uncle Jimmy since I was obviously reticent with him, feeling, no doubt, because of his personality that he did not welcome any close relationship. Until the day he died, Jimmy was very partial to Sister Sue's three girls. Back to my mother, she was the only truly innocent person I ever knew. She was modest and unassuming, and easily shocked. Always sunny natured, she never said a bad word about anyone. She was the exact opposite of her mother and it was said she was a copy of her father's sister in disposition. I remember her being utterly crushed and embarrassed when Grandma Erwin divorced Grandpa and took off for California. Mama had a great aunt who had no daughter of her own and also had a lot of money. This woman was a religious fanatic. She said God would not let any harm come to her because of her deep faith. She lived in a small town and would take the train to Quincy. When the train steamed into the depot, she would stand up close to it, and was told several times to stand back or she would be hurt. It was then she said no, nothing would happen to her, so she got up close to the moving train and it tore her arm off. She requested that when she died she be buried wrapped in a sheet with a sheaf of wheat in her arms, in an unmarked grave. This was done according to her wishes. Anyway, she bought my mother beautiful clothes, and always told her she could have anything she wanted, no matter what the cost, except red, because red was the color of the devil. She was the one who left Grandma all of her money when she died, which strengthened her desire to chuck it all and live it up, and she really did! I think I could write a whole book on my Grandmother Erwin. When she was three or four years old, her father decided to seek his fortune in the gold fields of California, so joined a wagon train west. With a pregnant wife and a small child they left Illinois in 1865 or 1866. En route, the wagon train was attacked by Indians and he was either captured or killed, they never knew which, but was never seen again. The mother then gave birth to a baby boy on the trail. Grandma never forgot that Indian raid and would tell of the wagons being drawn in a circle and hearing the savages whoop and yell as they rode round and round and shot their arrows, killing people and horses. In fact, when she lay dying, she thought there were Indians on the bed. After they arrived in California, her mother decided to take the two children and return to Illinois,. They had to come by water and I'm not sure how it was accomplished, but always told of coming back around the "Horn." They eventually got back to home territory and the mother remarried unhappily. She died in 1887 at age 45. Grandma always said her mother was the most beautiful woman who ever lived. I often wished I could have seen a picture of her. She evidently had a short and unhappy life. When Grandma left Grandpa and embarked on her new carefree life, she was in the prime of life. She was a very handsome woman, although of the Junoesque type. She weighed over 200 lbs., but was well

corseted and wore the styles of the day well. I remember once in particular, on one of her trips back to Fowler, she got off the train dressed all in grey. Grey satin dress, grey hat, grey shoes, and purse and I was so impressed. These visits were always accompanied by lavish gifts for everyone. She brought a lot of unsuitable clothes for me, an awkward, homely, spindly kid of 9 or ten. I distinctly remember one dress of lavender chiffon worn over a yellow satin slip. Another of changeable silk, which, when viewed from different angles would shimmer in colors ranging from blue to green, from pink to rose, from yellow to orange. It seems Grandma had seen children of movie stars in California dressed like this, and wanted me to have the same. I always wore them to Sunday School. She and my father did not see eye to eye. When she stayed with us for any length of time, there were always undercurrents of discord. She was a buffer many times between me and my father. When I was about 12 years old I was the only girl in school with long curls. I was so ashamed and desperately wanted my hair cut short like all the other girls. My father said no. Then Grandma came, and started her campaign to get my hair cut. How she was finally able to accomplish it, I never knew, but she took me to Quincy and I was shorn of my long curls. When we got back home, my father took one look at me and went out in the yard and cried. My mother kept my curls wrapped in tissue paper for many years.

Neither my mother nor grandmother cared anything about housekeeping, so when grandma was there we did all kinds of interesting things, particularly in the summer time. We would go out into the woods and gather wild flowers. Aunt Essie and Frances would come from Coatsburg and we would go out in the country and spend all day picking great armloads of daisies. We always brought them home and put them of tubs out in the yard and they stayed there till they wilted and died. We would go to a pond and gather cat tails. Grandma would take off her shoes and stockings and pull her long skirts up over her knees and wade out into the water. Non of the others would do that. She was considered quite a character in those days and had a bawdy sense of humor. Always jolly and unpredictable she was well liked, but drove my father to distraction. He was very strict about table manners, and we were never allowed to make any noise while chewing. Grandma knew this, and would take a spring onion, or radish or celery and crunch them, taking little nibbling bites then whole length of the vegetable. I used to marvel at this, as she sat with eyes demurely downcast crunching away and wondered how she dared to so defy my father. he never said a word but stood it as long as he could and would then get up and leave the table and go out in the yard. She would explode with laughter and of course I would too, but my mother was torn between loyalty to husband and mother. Grandma always referred to my father by his initials, L.E. This didn't go over so big either. In spite of this lifelong feud, I think it was mostly on the surface. During World War I when the flu epidemic was at his height, we were all laid low and Grandma came and took care of us for a few weeks. During that time, her only brother, George Taylor, died as a result the flu. On one of her trips to California, she was persuaded to invest her money in some kind of a land scheme. She lost all her money and was forced to go to work. She worked as a housekeeper and cook (her least favorite things) for several families, one of them being a very well known movie star of silent films, Billie Dove. Later she found she had diabetes and eventually had to have a toe amputated. She went from bad to worse, refused to stick to her diet and couldn't work any more. Ill, destitute and discouraged, she was forced to come back to Fowler. I can still remember her words as she got off the train, looked into my father's eyes and said, "Well, L.E., the bad penny has returned." She had lost her high spirits and became very embittered. She died in 1935. I adored my grandmother. She was the only grandparent I had when I was growing up and I always looked forward to her coming to visit us. I'm glad I have these memories of her.

As I said earlier, I have recollections of events that happened when I was very young. I remember living in a little house down town when I was three years old. It was there I broke Joy's doll and lost my mother's wedding ring. I can remember Grandma Erwin being there at times and making door stops. These had a base of a quart fruit jar filled with sand, and made to look like a Negro Mommy with a black head made of a cotton stocking, button eyes, bandana on her head, a long dress and a shawl crossed over her shoulders. I used to play with them as dolls. I remember playing with my cousin Dick Viar, who lived across the street. I can remember vividly a red sailor dress I had and a blue and white checked coat. I always wore a hat with elastic under the chin to hold it on. And of course high top shoes that laced up and long cotton stockings held up by supporters fastened to a belt of some kind around my waist. In the winter I wore long underwear and flannel bloomers and underskirt. I wore long flannel night gowns to be and in bitter cold weather Mama would heat a flat iron on the stove, wrap it in a heavy towel and put it in my bed. What a luxury to my cold feet. We had no heat in our bedrooms and of a morning would jump out of bed and run into the kitchen to warm by the stove. Our baths were Saturday night affairs taken beside the kitchen stove in a wash tub. The water had to be carried in from outside and heated on the stove. We had to go outside to the toilet and it was a nightly ritual at bed time for Mama to light the lantern and my sisters and I were wrapped up in coats, shawls, overshoes, etc. for our trip outside. This was in all kinds of weather, rain, snow, cold, or whatever. If we were sick, we were allowed to use a "chamber pot" but did not make a practice of it as some people did as my father did not approve of it. When I was about four, I think, we moved to Mrs. Foltze's house. She lived alone in a big house and rented us the downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs and she lived in the other two rooms upstairs. She was a retired school teacher, very educated and dignified and was probably a very good influence on me at times. In the yard at that time were several very tall cedar trees, taller than the two story house and one day I decided to climb to the top of one of them. I did, and reached the very top where I sat proudly surveying the view, when my mother and Mr. Foltz discovered me there and nearly had heart failure. They were afraid I would fall but I got down safely and was given a severe lecture on the dangers of a small girl doing such dangerous things. Mrs. Foltz had a parlor which was kept closed much of the time. It was a splendid room to my eyes with floor to ceiling windows, a deep pile velvet rug on the floor, a victorian set consisting of a sofa and six straight chairs upholstered in green velvet, a marble topped table and the crowning touch, a huge grand piano. After I started taking piano lessons, I was allowed to play on that piano. In the entrance hall, up on the wall, was a stuffed deer head complete with antlers. The large brown eyes of that deer made it seem alive and I used to love to touch it. Mrs. Foltz had such treasures as solid silver tea sets, trays, silverware, and a huge set of Bavarian china. This had tiny pink rosebuds on it and was used only on special occasions. The house did not have indoor plumbing but did have a tin sink in the kitchen with a pump on it. I thought this was the lap of luxury. There was an outside toilet, which she always referred to coyly as the "water closet." When I was six years old my father bought property across the street. The house there had burned down and he had our house built there. It was only a four room house to begin with but was new. It was christened "Dun Movin'". I can remember starting to school in the first grade. By that time Helen was in High School in Quincy, but Joy was still in Fowler School which at that time had the 9th grade. Since my underclothing consisted of a drop seat with buttons, I couldn't handle it myself, so Joy had to take me to the toilet and she was not very happy about it. I had long curls, very light blond and wore a ribbon in my hair. The boys in school delighted in pulling my curls and dipping them in the inkwells. In those days, every desk had a glass inkwell kept filled with ink. I can remember a little boy in my class who was sent up in the

front of the room to the blackboard and was so bashful and scared he wet his pants and it ran all over the floor. I can also remember what he had on. His mother had made a pair of black satin rompers and the pockets were cats' heads embroidered in yellow. I was so impressed by this that when Shirley was a baby I made her a sunsuit with cats' head packets. The boy's name was Junior Knorr. We went all through grade school together. We lived up on a hill close to the school house and in the winter time when there was snow on the ground all the kids came up on the hill with their sleds. At recess and during the noon hour we would slide down the hill and trudge back up pulling our sleds. We had a lot of fun. One time, Catherine Farrell, in my class had her leg broken while sliding down the hill and they took her to the hospital in Quincy. She was there in a cast for a long time and Mama and I went to see her and took her some paper dolls. Our school had two rooms, four grades in each room. It was two stories high and when we reached the fifth grade and could go upstairs we thought we were really grown up. I can remember all my grade school teacher's names. First grade was Mrs. Jenkins. She had one blue eye and one brown eye. Second grade was Miss Edna White who requested that we call her Miss Edna. Third and fourth was Myra Corse who was very strict and not well liked. Fifth grade was Merle Koch, my first man teacher. Sixth and seventh was Cecil Tout, who was very nice, but sissified and later turned out to be a homosexual. Eighth was Harry Blentlinger. Then I had to go to high school in Quincy. I went back and forth on the bus at first and later with a girl from Paloma who drove her father's car. Her name was Alice Kopsieker. My grade school days were happy ones. I knew all the kids having grown up with them. Quite a few lived in the country and had to walk long distances every day. Two families lived three miles south of town and walked it every day. The Paul family had 9 children. They were Violet, Viola, Luella, Lucella, Sterling, Florence, Margaret, Mildred and Dorothy. The Wilkins family were black, the only black ones in school at that time. They were Almenta, Alnora, Alvera, Marcellus, Marnetta, and Norman. Marcellus and Marnetta were twins. They were always half frozen when they got to school. Once in a great while if the weather was exceptionally bad, Mr. Wilkins would bring them all to school in a horse and wagon. I don't think Mr. Paul ever brought them as he was reported to be a mean man. I can't remember them ever staying home because of the weather. All of the kids who lived in the country brought their lunches to school in buckets and I envied them so as I went home for lunch. Once in a while I could prevail upon my mother to let me take my lunch and she bought me a little blue lunch pail with two handles that folded over the top. We had school programs and plays and picnics. We played games like hide and seek, ring around the rosy, crack the whip, hump rope. In later years we go a sliding board and swings and its a wonder we weren't all killed. I can remember play so hard at noon and recess like there was no tomorrow. I can remember a craze for playing jacks. Some of the more fortunate ones had store bought jacks, but most had to use a rubber ball and small rocks. In those days I can't ever remember having home work. I guess we did it all at school. I always got good grades in school, but don't believe I had to study hard for them. When I started to high school in Quincy it was a little different. There were so many kids and I didn't know many of them. We went to a different room for each class and this was confusing at first. I still made good grades except one winter I was sick for several weeks with measles, chicken pox and mumps. When I went back I had so much to make up and did all right except in my Latin class. The teacher was grumpy and when I couldn't get some of it she called me "wooden head" in front of the whole class and I was embarrassed to tears. I never did like her. My high school days were uneventful. I didn't get to go to any of the school events by living out of town. I did have a high school sweetheart. His name was Bobby Hellhake. Bobby was a very nice kid and we were good friends. We never got beyond the hand holding stage and a few stolen kisses. I

remember him writing in my autograph book.

I wish I was a china cup

And every time you took a sup

I'd get a kiss from you baby.

I guess he made it up. I had that book for many years but it finally go lost.

As I said before, I got good grades in high school without having to study very hard. I decided that I would like office work best, so finally decided on a commercial course. I knew I couldn't go to college, so dropped Latin, geometry, science, etc. and concentrated on typing, shorthand, English, office practice, etc. Without bragging (ha, ha) I really excelled in typing and shorthand and during a contest I typed and took shorthand faster than anyone else in the whole school. so I was eligible to go to Springfield for the State contest. However I didn't get to go, so will never know. I guess it was a good thing I did so well, as I ended up making my living as a secretary for 35 years.

When I was in the fifth grade the O'Harrow family moved to Fowler. The father, Elmer, was section foreman on the railroad. He and his wife, Flora had six children. They were, in order of age, Lloyd, Merle (Con), Albert, Ray, Dorothy, and Lois. Albert was two years older than I. Ray was my age, Dorothy (or Dody) was three years younger and Lois two years younger. They were a lively, rollicking, boisterous family, typically Irish. In fact they were referred to as "Shanty Irish" instead of "Lace Curtain Irish." They fought among themselves constantly, but no outsider ever dared to say a word about any member of the family as then they all ganged up and were fiercely loyal. Grandpa O'Harrow (Elmer) was a little banty rooster of a man, small of stature. His hair had been red in his youth and he was always blustering and ready to fight at the drop of a hat. He was devoted to his family and nothing pleased him more in later years than to have all the children, their husbands, and wives and grandchildren, home for Sunday dinner. Many times there were 15 to 20 there for dinner and he would sit and beam on them all. He was the first to run and grab a new baby and hold it jealously as long as he could, never letting anyone else have a turn. It always turned into a loud and noisy day with a lot of disagreements as some of the in-laws didn't get along very well. Vera, Merle's wife, always got up from the table saying she had to rock the baby (Connie) to sleep and with that excuse got out of having to help with the dishes. Pauline, Lloyd's wife, was critical of almost everyone, including Lloyd. Through all this discord, Grandpa O'Harrow beamed at everyone, Grandma O'Harrow rocked and smiled. She was born Flora McCaffery, another typically Irish family. I don't know very much about her family. She had four sisters, Margaret (or Mag) who married Charlie Forrest, Della who married Arlie Secrest, Cynthia Jane who never married, although she had a daughter Faye, and Blanch who married Gus Heubner. There were also three brothers (I think) Pete McCaffery, and older brother whose name I don't remember, and a younger brother who died at an early age. I believe his name was Albert. All of the McCaffery women were very pretty with black hair and dark brown eyes, almost black. They were cheerful, happy people. They were not educated and lived their lives day by day, not asking for anything beyond the creature comforts. I never knew Grandma O'Harrow to read a newspaper or a book, or to do any kind of fancy work, etc. She was an excellent cook and could bake luscious pies and cakes, but as soon as a meal was over, she was through. The cleaning up and dishwashing was turned over to the children as they got old enough. There were no knick knacks in the house, everything very plain and simple so as to keep cleaning to a minimum. She almost never went anywhere. In Fowler they lived next to a grocery store, but she never went there for groceries. In the afternoon when Grandpa came from work he went and bought the groceries and as a rule even made the choice as to what to buy. On Sundays it was either a

beef or pork roast or fried chicken, cole slaw, a vegetable or two, macaroni and cheese, etc. and either cake or pie for dessert, sometimes both. She had one good dress, black, which was sent for out of a Sears or Montgomery Ward catalog. Shoes and other clothing the same way. She kept a hat, renewing it from time to time, in case she had to go to a funeral. The only other time she left the house was to an occasional school Christmas program. Her days were spent sitting on the front porch in the summer and in a rocking chair in front of a window in the winter. Apparently this life style satisfied her and they were very happy. She always said she wasn't "well" but lived well into her 80's. She died of diabetes. I loved her dearly. Grandpa O'Harrow died of a heart attack in 1956 I believe - maybe earlier. She always maintained that her girls, Dody and Lois, were not strong. Well, I grew up with them, and two stronger, sturdier girls I never saw. I remember Dody, if we each had a candy bar, wolfing hers down and then jumping on my back, knocking me to the ground and taking my candy bar away from me. They led a pretty free life and got to do a lot more than I did as my parents were more strict.

Grandpa (Elmer Grant) O'Harrow never spoke much of his family. I do know his mother died when he was small and I don't know what happened to his father. He was raised by his grandparents and had to go to work at 11 years of age. His mother's maiden name was Grant and she was of the family of President (General) Ulysses S. Grant. He had only one sister, Olive (called Ollie). Her married name was Davidson and she had two children. They lived somewhere out in the wilds of Missouri, and one day her husband left for town to get some medicine for one of the children who was sick, and never came back. When Elmer and Flora were married, his grandmother lived with them and when Flora would scrub the kitchen floor with soap and water, she would go over it again with milk and say, "Now doesn't that look better?"

Lloyd was the oldest of the children. He married Pauline Oliver. He was a very quiet person and very hen pecked. Pauline was dictatorial and overbearing. She never fit in very well with the rest of the family. They had no children, which was a blessing.

Merle, or Con as he was called, was sort of the black sheep of the family. He first married Vera Plunkett. They had a stormy marriage. Two girls were born to them, Wanda Lee and six years later Connie June. Wanda was blonde and blue eyed like her mother and Connie was dark like her father. Vera didn't like Connie as she looked too much like the damn O'Harrowes and when she left Merle she took Wanda with her and left Connie who was a year old at home alone sitting in a high chair. Merle came home from work and found her there. He took her to his parents and she was raised by them with the exception of a few short times when he remarried and tried to take her to live with them but it didn't work out. After he and Vera were divorced, he married Faye Hedrick. Why, I never knew. Faye was not an attractive person, and had a nasal condition which caused her to sniff, or snort almost continually. This became very annoying. She and Connie had a mutual dislike for one another. I don't remember how long they were married but finally were divorced. Merle then started drinking in earnest and moved back home. His one redeeming feature was his care for his mother when she was sick before she died. I don't know much about the circumstances of his death, but he was middle aged when he died.

Ray was a good guy, but would never take any prizes for enthusiasm about working. He was a fun loving indolent person and had to be pushed to do anything. He married Marian Thorsen, who was a pusher. They had two daughters, Maureen Kay and Lee Anna. Ray died young. I know he had had surgery for cancer, but I believe died of a heart attack. I'm not sure.

Dody never married. For years she stayed with her parents and took care of them after the others were married and gone. Everyone expected this of her, but she finally broke away and went to Macomb,

Illinois where she got a job with Hagar Pottery. She worked there until she retired. She went back home every weekend and cleaned house, etc. for her mother. She dated very rarely when she was young, and lived with a girl friend, Margaret Carey, until her death. We were very good friends for a good part of our lives.

Lois, the youngest, was pretty spoiled and usually got whatever she wanted. She was the only one of the family to graduate from high school. She married Clyde Lord and they had three girls. Gail Jeannine, Lynn Ona and Connie Dee. There were no grandsons in the O'Harrow family. As of this writing, Lois is the only one still living.

Now, as to Albert, the third child. We were childhood sweethearts all through grade school. He was two years ahead of me in school and when he finished the 8th grade he wanted to go to high school but didn't get to mostly because of financial reasons and his folks didn't think it was necessary, so he took the 8th grade over. When I went to high school we cooled it for a couple of years. When I was a senior in high school we became engaged. We were married two weeks after my 18th birthday on October 17th, 1933. We set up housekeeping in three rooms in Fowler. I had been collecting dishes, blankets, etc. for awhile and we bought some furniture and paid a little bit each month. Our furniture consisted of a davenport and chair, another occasional chair, a small table and lamp. This completed the living room. For the bedroom we bought a dresser and his folks gave us a bed as they did each child when they married. It was a four poster and I loved it. My folks gave us a set of pots and pans and a blue bedspread. For the kitchen we bought a table and four chairs, a cabinet and a three burner kerosene stove. This completed our furnishings. We didn't have a refrigerator, or washing machine, or radio. Most young couples didn't. I had two tin tubs and a wash board and this was how I did our laundry. We paid \$5.00 a month rent and many times, especially during the winter when he didn't work regularly we literally didn't have any money. We could charge a few groceries at Keim's Grocery Store and on Sundays could always be sure of two good meals as we went to his folks for noon dinner and to my folks for supper. In the winter he would go along the railroad tracks and pick up coal and bring it home in a gunny sack. Once in a while if we had twenty cents and could borrow a car, we could go to a movie on Sunday. Admission was 10¢. Later the rates went up to 25¢. Our favorite form of entertainment was to go to the Maid Rite for sandwiches. They were 10¢ and a coke or root beer was 5¢. For a total of 30¢ we had a good old time. We didn't have a car, but could get a pass on the railroad. We lived on less than \$12.00 a week for the first few years. We ate a lot of potatoes and beans and if we had a garden could have vegetables in the summer. Everyone else was in the same boat though. This was the big depression of the 30's.

Interruption: Thought for the day. Contentment

This morning in April, a gorgeous early spring day with balmy breezes drifting in the open windows, curtains blowing softly inward. I found suddenly the thoughts of all the little tasks I should be doing, overwhelming me, pressing me down. I didn't want to be working. So I thought, "why not." I got a book, sat down in my Lazy Boy chair, a glass of iced tea at my elbow. After reading a while, little Becky {her dog} curled up on me lap asleep, Nicky {her other dog} asleep on the floor at my feet, and everything quiet except the occasional chirp of the birds, it suddenly occurred to me - This is contentment. Savor it. And I did.

I have been thinking lately of all the things I have to be thankful for. So many of these things we now take for granted, but to us older people who grew up in an earlier era, we can look back and wonder how

we got along. One of the things I am most thankful for is ice cubes. During the terribly hot summer days I used to crave ice cold drinks. We did not have refrigerators so had to put our food down in the well to keep cool. This was done by making a wooden platform that could be raised and lowered by ropes. The coldest thing we had to drink was cold well water. We did not have electric fans and air conditioning was unheard of. Many times in the hot summer we would sleep out of doors. When we went to church, cardboard fans were provided for everyone, usually by a local funeral home, for some reason. Some of the women took their own fans and many of these were very beautiful.

I am also thankful for bathrooms. Not to have to go outside in all kinds of weather is such a comfort. I'm thankful also for toilet paper, as in the days of my youth we used old catalogs and even newspapers.

I'm thankful for electricity. Before that we had coal oil lamps and the glass chimneys had to be washed and shined every day and it was almost impossible to see well enough to read or sew. Also all the electrical appliances. Irons no longer have to be heated on the stove, to`st can be made without putting the bread in the oven. Vacuum cleaners - what a blessing. Ever try sweeping a carpet with a broom and raising a dust? Electric sewing machines, stoves, hair dryers, electric blankets, almost everything depends on electricity, things we never dreamed of being possible.

Think of what the world was like before deodorant, and how about toothpaste? We used baking soda or salt. Shampoo - we used a bar of Ivory soap - or any soap we could get. Dishwashing and laundry detergents were unheard of, and bar soap was used. Power lawnmowers are fairly recent. Very few people had telephones. Those who did were on party lines - 10 to 12 people on one line. Everyone had their own rings like two shorts and one long, or five shorts, etc. Everyone listened in when the phone rang. A long distance call was a major project and only used for emergencies.

It may seem odd to be thankful for can openers, but unless you have tried to open a tin can with a knife you wouldn't know.

Something else we don't give a thought to is elastic. Before elastic we used draw strings in our underwear to hold it up or a complicated set of buttons. Supporters were used to hold up stockings. Scotch tape. Before that, messy paste or glue. Ball point pens - Before that, get a bottle of ink and dip the pen in it. Usually spilled it and had ink stained fingers always. So many little things that we now take for granted.

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